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The Meditation

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Abstract

The marsh wind . . . inquires with softness—what of Louis? And I breathe into the wind. . .
My haphazard mutterings in chordal symmetry. . . What of Louis?...

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The marsh wind
 . . . inquires with softness—what of Louis?
 And I breathe into the wind. . .
 My haphazard mutterings in chordal symmetry. . .
 What of Louis?
 The bird who soaked his feathers in the river water:
 A face in dismembered unity; piqued smile
 Sitting all alone, stirring like the pendulum in his pocket
 The circular ripples in laughter
 Pressed upon the wind, molded atoms . . . slumber-broken
 With incredible swiftness in smooth gayety
 Of dismembered face. . .
 What of Louis?
 Who cares, I call into the wind
 And feel the decay in my ears.
 The marsh wind in lucid circles
 Of infinite dimensionality
 What of Louis,
 The bird soaking in the river?

The dried crumbs: Listen, the reeds
 Presto, the movement of the hands,
 Timed with precision
 In unending pallid glow
 *Ein Heldenleben** and he is dead
 Dry cackle of his shrunken palate
 Louis has gone away

* by Richard Strauss

Thirty bars of one note . . . gone away
With the invisible timepiece of the river
Pounding in unison with precision
Precise dry cackle, stained across his vest
Heavy with the debris of the river
A hero dead and gone from life
Still ending and never ending
In the twilight of life, ascends the stairs
And flings the empty glass into the dank dark, swirling waters
Smashed glass in the river
Bobbing up and down
On the blood stained shirt of Louis
And I wonder about him
Where has he gone?
This dream of Strauss
Where has he gone
And why is the river so quiet?

Municipal pulpit, burdened and prospered
By wives' tales and brides' laments
Tossed upon the river in haphazard fashion.
Your tie is straight Louis. Now do just as you're told
And be sure to deposit in the collection box
And don't spit in the aisles
God watches you carefully
And he is not just a shout in the street
God is in you and he knows.
You're a good little boy
May God have mercy on you
And he straightened his frayed cuffs
And fumbled at his collar—you're a good lad
And what made you come here?
Ah, I know . . .
Bloodstained preacher
Boring holes in the bar-top with his elbows
And examining with bulging eyes
The anatomy of various women
Damned if I know why I joined.
Louis of the eyelashes, purpled
And blue pants, symbolism
Of Galileo's last sacrament

Yes, he'll be damned
But now, if God watches
He will see
The echo of his tainted soul
Reverberate to a thousand laughs
And parade across his brain
In searing temptations.

I'm a good boy, Louis watches from a clean bed
I, Louis Alphonse Bertrand,
Second son of my father
And image of my father's father
Son of France,
Her spitting image
I'm a good lad
I salute the Tricolor.
But here I am in the river water
Soaked in red blood, my blue pants
And anemic heart, whitened by dead blood
Here in the river
Here in the last sad soddened mess of youth,
Spilled in haste on the altar foot
My blood, hot and spilled with joy.
My empty glass is floating on the river.
The stain on the edge is sun-stained
Dried, gumless . . . I am here, soaking in wet content
Here am I
But where is Louis?

Darwin with a blue beard
Resting on the breast of a thousand apes.
These are my grandparents
And here are yours
Tied with expensive cord
Into quarto, eight by eleven
Printed in Tantner style,
Dull-edged, rough-sighted
A thousand apes, all holding hands
And dancing with a thousand smiles.
Where is Louis?
I am here

On page thirteen, there on the second row
Across from *forest primeval*
In between the river and the sea
On the banks of the forgotten river
I am
Louis Bertrand, the exile,
Where is he?

You're a sweet kid
And he felt her breasts
Soft and lip-touched
Soft and warm
And you're a good kid . . .
The water is cold
The river is swift
And I lie soaking
Here in the river sand
Where is Louis
He is here.
Where?

Louis is here, passioned by the liquid touch of the Seine
Precipitated by the last echoed dawn of silence
Imbedded in the river mud
One foot sticking at random in the air
Dangling with a grin on the toes
Foot stained mouth . . .
Why did I fail you?
Because I faded like the color in your flag
Faded and the energy burnt out:
Quickly will I dive
With mouth open, swallowing
The precious touch of life
In water, soft lapping water of the river.

I stained my feathers
Here in the river water
And I am glad.
Yes, Louis is here
And I am he,
Here, in the river water.